

California Child Welfare Council Meeting
Thursday, November 15, 2007
Discussion Highlights

1. Secretary Belshé Opening Statement Summary:

- Forefront goal that **every child in our state lives in a safe, permanent, stable home, nurtured by healthy families and supported by strong communities.**
- Discuss the process by which we're going to work together as a council over the course of our next, first couple of meetings.
- Develop a strategic framework to guide, inform and focus our work together as a council that speaks to our vision, our principles, and our specific strategic objectives over the course of the next 12 to 24 months.
- Have a draft strategic framework prepared by the end of the second meeting.
- Identify those critical challenges that as a council we believe require multi-agency collaborative strategies and approaches to improve outcomes for children.
- A few questions to address during the course of this and subsequent meetings
 - ✓ What are the key challenges that are affecting the safety, permanency and well-being of children?
 - ✓ What role will this council play in terms of addressing those issues; what issues really do require collaborative, coordinated, multi-agency strategies to be meaningful and effective?
 - ✓ Determine how we might organize and focus our work to address challenges.
- Dedicate an entire day as opposed to four hours, to really work systematically through these questions with the goal of identifying some of the principal near term challenges that we as a council want to address; some specific objectives for those priority challenges; and how we might organize and focus our work together to accomplish those goals.

2. Justice Moreno Opening Statement Summary:

- Acknowledged important work of Secretary Belshé, Assembly Members Bass and Maze, and others in creating and supporting this important collaborative leadership body.
- The Council creates a rare opportunity for our three branches of government to work in concert to break down the all too frequent and insurmountable agency, department and intergovernmental walls and barriers.
- Foster youth in California face tremendous ongoing challenges. The Council has an unprecedented opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of our state's most vulnerable youth.
- Update on work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care:
 - ➡ Appointed nearly two years ago by the Chief Justice. Charged with making politically viable recommendations to the Judicial Council on how the

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courts can improve safety, permanency and well-being and fairness for children in care. Will issue proposed reforms for public comment next year with implementation efforts to follow.

➡ Focused on three main areas of reform:

1. Improving court performance and accountability;
2. Enhancing collaboration and information sharing among the many arms of the system and government that “parent” children in care; and
3. Ensuring adequate and flexible funding and services.

• Urgent issues we must work on together:

- ☆ Sharing information;
- ☆ Finding strategies to reduce the need for foster care placements or the length of time spent out of the home;
- ☆ Attending to the needs of youth aging out of foster care; and
- ☆ Improving the well-being of foster youth while they are in our charge.

3. Council Member Introductions (including one goal each member has for Council):

- J. Pearson – Increase in public and private staffing resources to provide permanency for youth.
- Hon. Dave Jones (Assembly) – Improve health outcomes for children in system and children leaving system: 1) support annual health and biannual dental examinations for children/youth in the system; and 2) extend medical benefits for children/youth leaving system through age 21.
- K. Icenhower – Increase in the number of family-centered substance abuse treatment programs.
- A. Manuel – True accountability.
- A. Espana – Improve child well-being: 1) improve access to health care, mental health, and alcohol and drug treatment services; 2) address youth normalcy issues; and 3) ensure system is youth-driven.
- W. Lightbourne – Expand resources at front end to support biological parents and preserve families.
- Dennis Jones – Expansion of use of evidence-based practices by the courts, social services, and providers.
- A. Super (attending for April Attebury) – Collaborate to inform Council members regarding tribal issues.
- J. Swain - Every foster youth to have permanency and education as their safety net and support.
- K. Kaho – Expand statewide promising practices in the areas of education, workforce development and lifelong connections.
- M. Kriletich – Act with our hearts and address reentry issues and prisoners coming back from prison.

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- Hon. V. Raye – Defer suggesting any particular outcome until better sense of key issues and problems.
- B. Randall – Recommend policies and procedures for collaboration that reduce duplication and redundancies and identify dedicated funding streams to meet unmet needs.
- Hon. M. Nash – Develop strategies to reduce the disproportionate representation of minorities in child welfare system.
- T. Ploehn – Reduce reliance of out-of-home placement, reduce numbers of children in care, and reduce amount of time in care.
- F. Mecca – Development of concrete strategies to target and prioritize public resources dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and families with an alignment of accountability across systems to measure whether resources were prioritized and targeted.
- T. Kook – Take promising practices statewide especially in area of home connections/permanency and K-12 and higher education.
- L. Ames – Ensure compliance with National Indian Child Welfare Act and cooperation with tribal government in implementation.
- L. Heimov – Ensure care is family-driven.
- M. Choca – Develop a pathway for action on targeted prevention that keeps children in their homes and communities and out of the system.
- P. Gardner - Improve access to mental health for children/youth in foster care system especially intensive, individualized, home-based services.
- K. Berrick – Expand both CASA and family finding programs to ensure every youth in foster care has access to education and mental health advocacy.
- C. Schroeder – Reduce barriers to children, youth and families receiving the supports and services they need, when they need them.
- P. Reynolds-Harris – Achieve permanency for all children and youth in the system, particularly for teenagers by identifying permanent, lifelong connections.
- C. Huerta – Advocate for stronger prevention and early prevention for children and youth at risk of entering the foster care system.
- D. Green – Reduce length of stay in foster care.
- B. Needell – Improve sharing, linkage, analysis, and reporting of State administrative data housed in agencies across systems.
- S. Tyson – Identify concrete, supportable strategies for postsecondary education access and success.
- S. Mayberg – Promote coordinated, integrated services delivered to children and youth that are focused on achieving specific, attainable goals.
- J. Wagner – Develop stronger partnerships with other stakeholders in the child welfare system.
- R. Deihl – Promote streamlined, time sensitive, practical methods for families caring for children/youth to obtain services needed for children/youth in their homes.
- S. Sandoval – Increase resources for inpatient substance abuse treatment programs for families involved with the child welfare system.
- R. Zito – Support early identification of at-risk youth and families with substance abuse issues including methamphetamine abuse.

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- D. Ambroz – Increase role of education including possibility of dual enrollment programs with community colleges while foster youth are high school.
- M. Jones – Develop resources within the child welfare system where foster youth can go for support and help with questions about system and resources.
- Hon. J. Beall – Develop statewide vision, strategies and program goals that clearly articulate firm commitment set of policies and practices to reduce disproportionate share of children of color in foster care system.
- Hon. K. Bass – Identify dedicated funding source for child welfare system.
- K. Belshé – Collaborate in a consensus-based process to develop strategic framework that reflects the vision, mission and purpose and which is used in an applied way to focus and organize our work and speaks to specific goals that the Council is uniquely positioned to address; includes outcomes and accountability measures for the work of the Council.
- Hon. C. Moreno – Support Secretary’s goals and ensure courts are more responsive and family-friendly.
- E. Webb – Increase availability of community resources to prevent re-entries and reduce the disproportionate share of African American families in the child welfare system.
- B. Warner – Improve coordination of services across systems.

4. Bylaw-Bagley-Keene Review (Larry Bolton)

- Bagley-Keene requires open meetings including 10-day notice of meetings which will be posted on the web site.
- Draft Council Bylaws were presented for Council’s approval at the March 2008 meeting. Proposed bylaws include a provision stating that only Council members or Council member designees specifically authorized by statute (Chief Justice, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Chancellor of the California Community Colleges) may vote.

5. Assembly Majority Leader Bass Statement Summary:

- Our entire State is responsible for addressing the needs of children in our foster care system; we need to ensure that we are not collectively accused of being neglectful or abusive to these children.
- AB 2216 – and the Child Welfare Council it created – was aimed at addressing the need to bring California and its leaders together on “one page” to address the needs of this population.
- Hopes that the Council will build on important ongoing work of the Blue Ribbon Commission, the Interagency Taskforce, and other existing bodies. Aim is to establish statewide leadership and collaboration among those various entities engaged on behalf of foster children.
- Committed to finding a dedicated funding stream for these children – a way to fund the child welfare system that is not subject to budget year “whims.”

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6. California Child Welfare Council Overview (John Wagner)

- Child Welfare System Overview
 - ☆ Safety
 - ☆ Permanency
 - ☆ Well-Being
- Challenges
 - Funding system;
 - Funding streams – how do we best use limited resources and funding strings (data analysis);
 - Data information sharing across systems;
 - Changing counties for kids in foster care;
 - Assistance for transitional age youth; and
 - Diversion – strengthen families.

7. Next Steps: Key Questions

- Do you agree these are the key challenges facing California's CWS system?
- What do you see as the appropriate role of the CA Child Welfare council in addressing challenges?
- How do we focus and organize our work to be most effective?

8. Council Interactive Session Summary

- Fastest growing population of children entering care includes young children, ages 0-5 years – 20% under age 1; half under age of 5.
- Transitioning youth – reduce number of kids aging out of the system and obtain meaningful adult relationships for children/youth.
- Address disproportionate representation of minorities in system.
- Review State and county structure.
- Promote prevention.
- Education is the best way to break the cycle – it is a critical leveler.
- Consider federal funding restrictions.
- Inventory existing practices for those which improve outcomes.
- Reduce length of stay in system.
- Have prevention focus.
- Consider promising practices such as joint visits by workers and community providers to foster family linkages to services.
- What can we do before the child or family is engaged in the system? Can this Council address community and socioeconomic factors? Or are these beyond reach of Council?
- Consider post-permanency services including respite and crisis intervention services.
- Integration of funding across systems.

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- Include individuals, caregivers, and families affected by system in processes that involve them.
- Address family and parent distrust of system.
- Consider drug courts.
- Consider policy that allows adoptive families to give kids back, as well as caregiver and congregate care – 7-day notices.
- Involve more community partners.

9. Priorities for Challenges Inventory:

- What challenges/focus areas is the Council uniquely situated to address as an interagency, collaborative body?
 - Early intervention & prevention including early reunification services.
 - Disproportionate representation of minorities in child welfare system.
 - Funding flexibility and coordination
 - Bringing best/promising practices to scale statewide
 - Access to Alcohol and drug/mental health treatment
 - K-12 education/postsecondary education
 - Education for child welfare and other systems
 - Lifelong connections/permanency
 - Data sharing & tracking
 - Family-driven, youth guided care
 - Transition age youth
 - Improving & enhancing child well-being
 - Support for relative caregivers and foster families
 - Resource adequacy within counties, workloads, caseloads
 - Inter-agency, inter-county transfer of children/youth.
 - Oversight for implementation of existing laws.

10. Possible Criteria for Prioritizing Challenges

- Where can Council have most positive impact?
- Which challenges promote collaboration?
- Which challenges are most urgent?
- What are most significant system gaps and deficits?
- What actions can be accomplished administratively through policy or fiscal recommendations not requiring legislative action?
- Is the challenge practical or achievable?

Additional suggestions:

- Before considering challenges, determine whether there is consensus on key systemic deficits.

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- Conduct an environmental scan to ensure Council is not duplicating efforts or work of other bodies.
- In considering recommendations, do they reflect evidence-based or promising practices?

11. Next Meeting Date – March 18, 2008 (day-long meeting) in Sacramento.

12. November 2007 – March 2008 - What's Next:

- Prepare a summary document of today's meeting to be distributed to the Council and posted for public on web page;
- Request that Council and members of the public review the documents with their individual constituencies to identify their top 4 or 5 issues - if additional issues need to be addressed and bring this feedback to next meeting;
- Staff will collect top issues to present during March meeting for Council's consideration;
- Focus groups with foster youth and other key constituencies to gather additional information;
- Looking into other work that's already been done and bring it to Council's attention;
- Sending a document to each Council member to collect basic information including name, title, organization, what your organization does, email, etc. which can then be shared with all the Council members;
- Making a Council web site available through the CHHSA website, www.chhs.ca.gov (click on "Initiatives" tab)
- Ensuring information sharing with the Council is consistent with the requirements of Bagley-Keene.

13. Public Comment Summary:

- Carol Brown, California Nurses Association – advocated Council consider recommendations "Code Blue Report" and role of public health nurses in child welfare system.
- Gordon Jackson, California Department of Education – informed Council that California Department of Education was represented at Council meeting (designee could not attend due to conflict).